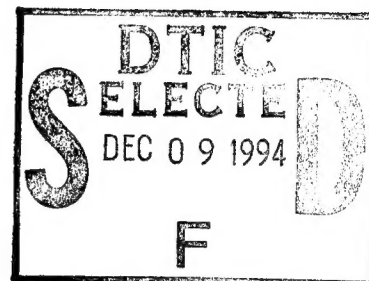


1994
Executive Research Project
S18

Congressional Black Caucus and American Foreign Policy



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19941201 091

Unclassified

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY N/A			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.	
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE N/A			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) Same	
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) NDU-ICAF-94-218			7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION National Defense University	
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION Industrial College of the Armed Forces		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable) ICAF-FAP		7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Fort Lesley J. McNair Washington, D.C. 20319-6000
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Fort Lesley J. McNair Washington, D.C. 20319-6000			9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable)		10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.
				WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) Congressional Black Caucus and American Foreign Policy				
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Renard H. Marable				
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Research		13b. TIME COVERED FROM Aug 93 TO Apr 94		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) April 1994
15. PAGE COUNT 47				
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION				
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) SEE ATTACHED				
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified	
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Judy Clark			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (202) 475-1889	
			22c. OFFICE SYMBOL ICAF-FAP	

ABSTRACT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Table of Contents.....	1
Abstract.....	2
Introduction.....	3-4
Historical Overview.....	4-8
Coalition Building.....	8-11
United States African Foreign Policy.....	11-16
Black Participation in Foreign Affairs.....	16-18
Problems in Africa.....	18-21
Criticisms of the CBC.....	21-24
Conclusions.....	24-30
Recommendations.....	30-31
The Future.....	31-32
Endnotes.....	33-36
Bibliographical Entries.....	37-41

ABSTRACT

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) is one of the most influential and dynamic groups in Congress today. This paper traces the history of the CBC, examines its organization, assesses its effectiveness as a corporate body, looks at its acceptance in the black community, and examines the group's impact on formulating American Foreign Policy regarding Sub-Saharan Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research project is to examine the role and influence of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) as it relates to American foreign policy regarding Sub-Sahara Africa. An examination of the CBC's history, organization, and operations is provided as well as an analysis of the group's effectiveness is undertaken. Their effectiveness is measured in terms of how they are perceived by key actors in their environment (Congressional staffers, a variety of government officials in the State Department and Agency for International Development (AID), and private lobbying organizations); the amount of influence they yield in terms of obtaining funding for Sub-Sahara Africa; and how the black community views the CBC. Furthermore, a review of criticisms of CBC operations is presented and analyzed. Finally, the last portion of this paper addresses recommendations for further research, and looks at the future of the CBC.

The term black community is a widely accepted generic term used to describe all black Americans in the U.S. For purposes of this paper, I will use the term as commonly used in America today.

Not surprisingly, very little substantive information is available on the CBC. Most information is primarily found in journals and newspaper articles plus literature prepared and distributed by the CBC or the CBC Foundation. Therefore, to supplement the literature available on this subject, a limited number of interviews were conducted with House and Senate staffers, State Department personnel, AID officials, and foundation personnel. Because of the college's strict policy concerning

nonattribution, unless otherwise noted, no reference is made to any specific individual that was interviewed for this paper.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

"The Congressional Black Caucus was formed in 1970 when the 13 black members of the U.S. House of Representatives joined together to strengthen their efforts to address the legislative concerns of black and minority citizens. These members believed that a Black Caucus in Congress, speaking with a single vote, would provide political influence and visibility far beyond their numbers."¹ Initially, the principal focus of the caucus was "on civil rights laws and South Africa sanctions."² Because of their limited scope and influence during the early years, most Washington politicians did not view the caucus as a potent or viable political force. However, the caucus has grown over the past twenty three years to become one of the most influential and dynamic groups in Congress today.³ According to CBC officials and several congressional staffers, the Democratic leadership of the House consults the CBC leadership on all major policy issues and before making policy decisions.

Today there are forty members of the CBC. This represents an increase of sixteen members from the 102nd Congress largely because of congressional reapportionment. Traditionally, the CBC members are Democrats. Thirty-eight are voting members of the House including one Republican, with one nonvoting House member and one Senator. The CBC grants associate memberships too non-blacks that support CBC programs and initiatives. There are currently thirty-six associate members.⁴ "The CBC meets weekly when Congress is in

session to discuss strategy and policy matters of significance to caucus members. In order to further the policy objectives of the CBC, the members have organized themselves into eight task forces: business and finance; community development; crime and violence; health; education and welfare; international affairs; labor and industry; and science and technology."⁵

Caucus members have been extremely "successful in rising to strategic positions on House Committees to effect needed changes in federal policies. Today a CBC member holds the office of Chief Deputy Whip of the House of Representatives, three chair full house standing committees, fifteen caucus members hold Subcommittee Chairmanships,"⁶... "and one is the president of the entire freshmen class."⁷

The CBC establishes "a yearly legislative agenda setting forth key issues which it supports: full employment, national health care, education, minority business assistance, urban revitalization, rural development, welfare reform, and international affairs including South African apartheid and international human rights."⁸ The group "works to implement these objectives through personal contact with other House members, through the dissemination of information to individual black constituents, by working closely with black elected officials in other levels of government,"⁹ establishing coalitions with other political organizations, and preparing and distributing issue papers and press releases. Although the primary focus of the CBC is oriented toward blacks, their charter also emphasizes the organization's pledge to serve as the vanguard to help all poor and

disadvantaged American citizens.

Leadership of the caucus rotates each congressional session. For the 103rd Congress, the Honorable Kweisi Mfume, D-MD serves as the CBC Chair. "He was elected by acclamation after winning a first ballot, 27-9 in December 1992."¹⁰ Mr. Mfume is charismatic and a politically savvy leader, who has won high praise for his leadership of the caucus. This is particularly significant because of the diverse makeup of the caucus. There are sixteen new members, and of these, thirteen come from rural congressional districts with different concerns and needs than their urban contemporaries. This fact combined with the addition of ten black women legislators provide Mr. Mfume several major challenges. The more significant challenges facing Mfume include his ability to keep the group together on key issues important to the caucus; to avoid parochialism and infighting among members; and effectively forming coalitions with other organizations to promote the interests of the caucus.¹¹

A three-person staff supports the Congressional Black Caucus. An executive director heads the staff that provides routine administrative and logistical support to the caucus. Each member pays \$5000 annual dues and associate members pay \$1000 to support staff operations.¹² The dues are paid from Congressional appropriations allocated to each congressman for office administrative operating expenses. In addition to the caucus staff, a foundation provides support as well. The CBC Foundation "was established in 1976 as a nonpartisan, nonprofit, public policy, research and educational institution."¹³ The foundation

has a staff of twenty-five people supervised by an executive director. It serves as the research arm of the CBC, conducts fund raising activities to pay for foundation activities and programs, and "sponsors a series of issue forums, leadership seminars and regional conferences to stimulate dialogue and educate African Americans in the fundamentals of legislative and public policy development."¹⁴

The foundation's largest activity of the year is hosting the annual legislative weekend conference that is "widely recognized for providing a national forum for the examination of strategies and viable solutions to public policy issues facing African Americans"¹⁵ Top black leaders throughout the country attend this annual event. In September 1993, the five day affair was held in Washington, D.C. at the Washington Convention Center. Attending were such notable personalities as Professor Lani Guinier, Law Professor; Reverend Jesse Jackson, Chairman Rainbow Coalition; Dr. Benjamin Chavis, NAACP Executive Director; and Minister Louis Farrakhan, Leader of the Nation of Islam among others. Primarily domestic issues were on the agenda, however, two forums were held on foreign affairs: "US Foreign Policy in the Caribbean and Strengthening US Commitment Towards Africa."¹⁶ The results of these forums have not yet been published according to CBC Foundation officials.

The CBC recently began a new program to provide an additional forum for black Americans across the country to participate in the political process. This is being achieved by sponsoring regional public policy conferences at various locations throughout the

country. The first regional public policy conference took place in Los Angeles, California in July 1993. Twenty members of the CBC attended this two day inaugural event that attracted over 2,000 participants. According to CBC Foundation officials, the conference was a huge success because of the large number of participants, and the great support received from Clinton administration officials to address problems of particular concern to blacks. The organization plans to conduct at least two regional conferences per year.¹⁷ Another conference took place March 18-19 1994 in Miami, Florida, but no information is available on the results of the conference.

COALITION BUILDING

The CBC is not alone in pushing for a strong American agenda for Africa. They usually work in concert with many other organizations in an effort to boost their influence and increase their power and prestige in foreign affairs. They have worked with other prominent African American organizations which have significant influence on American foreign policy in Africa. One such private organization is TransAfrica. TransAfrica is "a non-profit lobbying organization incorporated in Washington, D.C. with Randall Robinson serving as the executive director. TransAfrica is dedicated to the mission of monitoring legislative activities and lobbying for more progressive U.S. foreign policy toward Africa and the Caribbean."¹⁸ This organization had been instrumental in serving "as a force for political action by persuading the administration and congressional leaders to review and revise policies regarding Africa."¹⁹

Another politically powerful organization is the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (the Joint Center). Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the Joint Center is the only nationally recognized black "think tank" in America. Its objectives are primarily domestically orientated with emphasis on ensuring the black perspective is taken into account in the development of policies. However, with the growing U.S. world leadership role "and to contribute directly to the debate over U.S. foreign policies, the Joint Center expanded and strengthened its international affairs program in 1992 with the appointment of a full time director."²⁰ The primary purpose of the Joint Center's efforts is to make foreign policy relevant for black Americans by emphasizing economic and political awareness. For example, the Joint Center has taken a very active role in "democratic reform movements in Africa. In cooperation with the National Endowment for Democracy, the Center is administering program grants in Botswana, Senegal, South Africa, Ghana, Uganda, and the Sudan to assist in the move toward democratization. In Ghana, a conference entitled 'Proposals for Peace, Prosperity, and Development in Ghana' was co-sponsored with the Institute for Economic Affairs in Africa."²¹ Additionally, the Joint Center in conjunction with the South African Institute for Multi Party Democracy is currently administering a one million dollar contract for AID. This contract will help Africans build institutions and procedures that will facilitate electoral reform and transition to a political system that includes blacks. Along with the National Endowment for Democracy and The South African Institute for Democratic

Alternatives, the Joint Center sponsors conferences and seminars with participants for every segment of society to openly discuss democratic reforms.²² This organization has had a positive impact on American foreign policy and has produced outstanding results in training hundreds of Africans in democratic processes and procedures. The government must expand the role of the Joint Center and similar organizations to profit from their particular expertise.

Beginning with the 103rd Congress, new efforts to work with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus began.

"In January 1993, Rep. Jose E. Serrano, D-N.Y. became the chairman of the Hispanic Caucus with a pledge to form alliances with the Black Caucus and other minority groups on the Hill. Since then, the two Caucuses jointly opposed the enhanced-recession bill and cuts in Medicare spending in the House version of the budget reconciliation bill."²³

With a combined force of 56 members, the two groups banding together can become a very potent political force. Their union is significant in the sense the groups rarely in the past worked as a team. Quite often they worked against each other, but now are committed to pursuing policies that are profitable for both groups.

The Subcommittee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee is also a major player in formulating American foreign policy. The subcommittee consists of six members and a four-person professional staff. Because most, if not all legislation dealing with Africa emanates from this subcommittee, it is a powerful committee indeed. In its crucial position the subcommittee interacts with a variety of African constituent organizations including the CBC, the State Department, the Senate, various think

tanks, church groups, lobbying groups, and nongovernmental organizations.

Other groups the CBC works closely with in foreign and domestic affairs include: the National Association of Colored People (NAACP), The African American Institute, The Jewish Caucus, Africare, The Nation of Islam, and the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues.

UNITED STATES AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Historically, in my opinion, United States foreign policy toward Sub-Sahara Africa is best characterized as indifferent or one of benign neglect. U.S. interest in Africa was primarily a result of Cold War policies designed to counter the perceived Soviet threat. The superpowers generally "found fertile ground to manipulate African countries toward their own ends."²⁴ With the end of the cold war and collapse of the USSR, many argue that the United States no longer has any interest in Africa. This position of the U.S. did not significantly change with the election of President Bill Clinton. In November 1993, Secretary of State Warren Christopher reaffirmed the Clinton Administration's Foreign Policy objectives. He stated US foreign policy priorities were "economic security, reform in Russia, a new framework for NATO, trade relations with the Far East, Middle Eastern affairs, and nuclear nonproliferation."²⁵

The Clinton Administration has still not articulated a clear policy toward Sub-Sahara Africa. Administration policies to date concerning Africa are largely a result of actions taken by the CBC,²⁶ by pressures generated by the news media, or because natural

disasters such as mass starvation in Ethiopia occurred. There is a general perception among some congressional staffers and think tank officials that the CBC's influence on domestic and foreign affairs is significant and increasing every day. For example, the CBC was instrumental in delivering 37 votes to support President Clinton's budget which passed the House by two votes.²⁷ Other illustrations of the effectiveness of the CBC is reflected in the following statement from Graeme Browning, a reporter for the National Journal.

"Plying the power of that bloc with remarkable effectiveness, the Black Caucus blocked floor debate on the enhanced-recession bill for two weeks in April, forced the House Democratic leadership to add \$920 million in funds for summer jobs for urban youth to the supplemental spending bill in May and in July made itself a force to be reckoned with in conference deliberations over the budget reconciliation bill."²⁸

In foreign affairs, the CBC's impact can be measured in terms of their influence on American policies regarding South Africa, Haiti, and Somalia.²⁹ The CBC has had considerable help from TransAfrica and the Joint Center in securing passage of legislation instituting economic sanctions against South Africa. These two groups were also instrumental in obtaining Nelson Mandela's release from prison by pressuring administration officials. In the past many prominent black leaders such as, Jessie Jackson (Chair, Rainbow Coalition) and Ron Dellums (Chairman, House Armed Forces Committee) bitterly opposed U.S. intervention overseas. However, when American troops deployed to Somalia, there was no opposition from these and other black leaders. This is a testament to the CBC's expanded role and influence in foreign affairs and it's

increased importance and prestige in the black community.³⁰

Corporate America recognizes the increased political effectiveness of the CBC. "McDonnell Douglas, for example, rented the cavernous National Air and Space Museum for a reception honoring 14 black freshman legislators. It was a several fold increase in spending over the company's 1992 support, says Thomas M. Culligan, a McDonnell vice president. He says the largess was prompted by heightened awareness of minority issues and the fact that some 7,000 McDonnell employees live in the district of caucus member Rep. William Clay (D., Mo). 'We want to work with the caucus,' Mr. Culligan says. It's a growing voice, and its agenda grows with it."³¹

President Bill Clinton also recognizes the political influence and clout of the CBC. Early in his administration, he overlooked the importance and significance of the caucus when he made an unpopular decision on a key economic bill important to the CBC. Clinton was immediately verbally assaulted by the caucus. He eventually made peace with the CBC by inviting them to the White House to discuss issues important to the CBC. He now considers their advice through the House leadership when making major decisions concerning policies important to the CBC. At the Annual Legislative Weekend Black Caucus Dinner on September 18, 1993, President Clinton served as the keynote speaker. In his remarks he praised the CBC for its outstanding leadership, support of his administration, and the important role blacks play in government.³²

Further evidence of CBC's increased influence can be found in the appropriations area. When the administration submitted its

budget request for Africa to Congress, the State Department only requested \$800 million -the exact same amount requested in FY 93.³³ However, this amount was changed in committee and increased by \$100 million strictly because of black caucus influence.³⁴ But, this still represents less than 10% of American foreign aid. Many African observers believe this amount is not sufficient to meet the needs of Africa. Efforts are currently underway by the House Subcommittee on Africa to propose legislation to increase this amount to at least \$1 billion.³⁵

Dr. David A. Bositis, a Senior Research Associate in a study commissioned by the Joint Center found during an analysis of selected CBC 1992 roll-call voting that "CBC members exhibited a remarkable level of agreement, excepting Republican Representative Franks. In presidential support, in party unity (voting in agreement with a majority of House Democrats), and in concordance with the conservative coalition, the members of the CBC generally voted together."³⁶ "CBC members voted with the CBC majority, on average, 83.9 percent of the time on the 45 votes that were studied in the report."³⁷

A top official of the Republican Party and several Republican staffers indicated Republicans as a whole do not give the CBC the same recognition, status, and influence as the Democrats do. This is partly because the caucus is mainly composed of Democrats. Only on rare occasions will the CBC work together with Republican legislators on projects or jointly sponsor legislation.³⁸

The CBC has not always supported all administration programs or agreed with the President and the House Democratic leadership

100 percent of the time on major national issues. For example, the CBC adamantly opposed NAFTA and voted as a block against the measure. "The CBC says NAFTA will hurt black workers in both the United States and the Caribbean. The loss of jobs to Mexico; environmental concerns; a dearth of minority business opportunities; and the treaties impact on trade in the Caribbean are reasons"³⁹ why the group did not support the NAFTA bill. In the final analysis, the bill successfully passed despite the CBC's opposition.

When President Clinton withdrew Lani Guiniers' nomination for assistant attorney general, he was snubbed by the CBC on June 9, 1993 when they rejected his invitation to meet at the White House to discuss the issue.⁴⁰ These points illustrate the CBC's independence of administration and congressional leadership actions and policies. On the whole, however, the CBC is viewed as supportive of the Clinton Administration.

Although the power and influence of the caucus is increasing, considerable work must still be accomplished by the organization to garner the support of the national press. The need for additional support was evident during the CBC's annual legislative weekend activities in September 1993 when the news media virtually ignored the most important event of the year for the organization. Except for one major article in *Newsday* the following Monday and selected C-SPAN coverage of the Farrakhan and Jackson debate, the other major newspapers did very little. "Really disgraceful, however, was the slim and shoddy coverage in the *New York Times*."⁴¹ There are several possible solutions to this problem. One option is for

the CBC to hire a public relations specialist. Another option as Doug Ireland, a reporter for *Newsday* indicated in his article is for more blacks to be put into America's newsrooms and actively involved in deciding what to cover and how.⁴² In any case, the CBC must take more of an active role in coordinating media coverage for its major events.

Internal strife is not new to the CBC. Over the years a number of significant disagreements between and among caucus members were reported in the national media. Representative Gary Franks "the only conservative and only republican"⁴³ member of the CBC that represents a predominately white district caused quite a controversy in June 1993. Initially at the start of the 103rd Congress, Franks could not attend entire CBC sessions. When the discussions "turns to political strategy - the group adjourns and becomes the Democratic Black Caucus, and Mr. Franks is asked to leave."⁴⁴ As a result of his "frosty treatment by other caucus members because he is on the opposing side of the group's position on just about every issue, and for his exclusion from caucus meeting, Franks threatened to resign. However, he finally agreed to remain a member of the caucus only after constituents pleaded with him to stay."⁴⁵ In addition to internal strife, "as the caucus matures, it's also suffering a welter of growing pains. Behind closed doors, for example, its members disagree along several lines: urban versus rural, liberal versus conservative and, occasionally, senior versus junior."⁴⁶

BLACK PARTICIPATION IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Black Americans traditionally have not actively participated

to any great degree with formulation of American foreign policy. Black interest traditionally centered on domestic affairs and civil rights issues. On the other hand, blacks were generally excluded from active involvement in foreign affairs because of cultural bias. Foreign affairs was perceived by many as the province of elite influential whites and as a result, blacks did not fully participate in the foreign affairs decision making process. There have been notable exceptions such as Ralph Bunche an American Statesman awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950, and Andrew Young the United Nations Ambassador during the Carter Administration.

According to a top official at the Joint Center, blacks do not have great linkage to Africa. Black Americans for the most part do not know what country or region of Africa their ancestors came from. As a result, blacks have not shown a great interest in foreign affairs affecting Africa nor for the world as a whole. However, other nationalities and especially white Americans retain ties to the "old country." They still tend to participate in some manner influencing policies pertaining to their ancestral homelands.

Recently, however, blacks are beginning to take a more active role and have "successfully influenced U.S. policy on particular issues or countries. Occasionally, blacks have done so, as in the case of South Africa, where they forced major changes in U.S. policy that contributed directly to the collapse of apartheid."⁴⁷ Milton D. Morris, Vice President for Research at the Joint Center argues the world has dramatically changed and "that black Americans have vital interests at stake in this emerging world order that

demand their full, prompt engagement in international affairs."⁴⁸ In addition to potentially enormous economic benefits, with increased black participation there is more likelihood that U.S. foreign policy can be "broadened from a Eurocentric policy focus to a global one that more fully recognizes Africa and the third world."⁴⁹

PROBLEMS IN AFRICA

The African continent is the poorest continent in the world. Africa is the largest continent with 50 independent and diverse countries with over 750 million people. Africa is plagued with every serious malady known to man and has the worst living conditions on earth. For example, most African countries suffer from abject poverty, greed, drought and other severe climatic conditions. Most countries also have a variety of significant health problems such as AIDS and malaria. Many nations wrestle with acute starvation, ethnic and tribal conflicts, political instability and turmoil, human rights abuses, uncontrolled population growth,⁵⁰ massive environmental and economic problems, drug trafficking and terrorism.⁵¹ "Africa is the continent with the lowest growth rate of per capita GDP, the lowest life expectancy (51 years), the lowest primary school enrollment rate, the lowest daily caloric intake, and the highest percentage of people living under the international poverty line."⁵²

Many people do not understand the extent and significance of Africa's problems, and the negative impact these problems may have on the rest of the world. The most telling of these problems are Africa's poor and declining economic situation and "dysfunctional

politics." Robert Kaplan in an article from *The New Republic* in December 1993 states many of Africa's problems are directly tied to African culture, political turmoil, corruption, and just plain, bad government. He believes the best solution to many of the problems are for Americans to acknowledge two facts. First, African problems cannot be solved with massive amounts of aid. Second, the surest way to attain success is to encourage private investment. He contends money will migrate to those nations that are able and willing to promote political stability and institute economic reforms. For those countries that do not provide conditions that are conducive for democracy and free market economies, these countries will, in his opinion, revert to anarchy. In instances of this nature, Kaplan believes the U.S. should not be overly concerned. Free market forces will intervene and select those countries that are most deserving of private investment. His bottom line is if Africans first help themselves then they can expect outside assistance. Based on conversations with several Congressional staffers, I believe most CBC members generally support this position as well.

Political instability must also be reasonably addressed. Africans must take the lead in resolving political conflict(s), tribal and ethnic fighting, and establish a framework that moves countries away from one party rule and toward democracy. Without a serious commitment from the African elite, any action taken by other nations will likely result in failure.

Economically Africa is worst off today that it was 30 years ago. This view is corroborated by Canada's North South Roundtable

which found in its 1991 Report that:

Africa as a continent has become increasingly marginalized. Its share in the world economy had fallen to under 2% by 1985; its terms of trade had fallen by 40% since 1980 while its indebtedness to the rest of the world has risen to some \$280 billion. Perhaps worst of all, serious poverty has risen while incomes per head in sub-saharan Africa have fallen by 20% over the past decade. The report further noted the region's overall record was predominantly negative. This was manifested within Africa in severely depressed economic growth rates, stagnant agricultural production, deteriorating social services, and declines in living standards. Externally, it was marked by a rising debt burden inadequate resource flows, and a sharp fall in commodity prices for Africa's key exports.⁵³

Africa's dismal economic picture means the U.S. has an opportunity to develop a planned progressive policy or continue to react to crisis situations as they occur. In any case, with an interdependent world, America will be involved in Africa in one way or another. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the country to take the initiative and devise policies favorable to the U.S. in dealing with Africa.

Because of Africa's chronic problems many policy makers argue that the U. S. does not have any interests and should not be engaged on the continent. However, CBC officials and State Department personnel believe the U.S. does have interests in Africa. These interests are principally a commitment to democracy in Africa, economic security, and humanitarian interests. On May 12, 1993, in testimony before the House Subcommittee for Africa, Mr. George E. Moose, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Department of State reaffirmed these important Clinton Administration goals.⁵⁴

Although the administration has adopted worthy goals for

Africa as espoused by Moose, American foreign policy towards Africa, however, is skewed toward providing minimal support in comparison with other regions of the world. Furthermore, American foreign policy has a dominant Eurocentric slant. That is to say the primary emphasis is on providing support to European nations often at the expense of other regions of the world. To be an effective force the CBC "will need to encourage a major overhaul of U.S. foreign aid policy as one way to improve Africa's chances for significantly increased assistance."⁵⁵

CRITICISMS OF THE CBC

There have been many critics and criticism of the CBC. The editors of *The National Review* recently lambasted the CBC for "embracing Louis Farrakhan and establishing a new partnership with the Nation of Islam."⁵⁶ The editors, along with other mainstream publications like *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, felt Mr. Fariakhan's anti-Semitic stance and expressing his opinion that Judaism is a "gutter religion" are political liabilities the CBC does not need. CBC counters this with an argument that it establishes working relationships with any group(s) necessary to forge effective coalitions to further its organizational goals. However, this fragile relationship was jeopardized in late January 1994 when a subordinate of the Nation of Islam, Khalid Abdul Muhammad caused a major controversy. Mr. Muhammad made some rather disparaging remarks about Jews, Catholics, and black leaders. His remarks angered top black leaders, Jews, white leaders and they called on Mr. Fariakhan to denounce his aide's remarks as "racist, anti-Semitic, damaging and untrue."⁵⁷ Many prominent black leaders

saw this event as an opportunity for the CBC "to repudiate the covenant with Farrakhan."⁵⁸ and distance itself from the Nation of Islam. Some black leaders do not want the CBC to be affiliated with the Nation of Islam under any circumstances because of possible negative repercussions such an association might bring on the group. Eventually Fariakhan denounced the remarks of his aide. Based on this denunciation, the CBC and the Nation of Islam continue to retain a fragile formal relationship.

Another major criticism of the CBC is that many feel far too much emphasis is placed on domestic issues. Critics argue the caucus gets involved in foreign affairs only when a crisis situation develops such as was the case in Somalia or Haiti. Critics further claim the CBC has no consistent approach to dealing with foreign affairs. CBC officials feel this criticism is not fair "for they have organized themselves into one of the most effective foreign policy blocs in Washington"⁵⁹ and have made significant contributions in pushing the American government to take positive action in the foreign policy arena. For example, Mr. Mfume recently led a Congressional delegation to South Africa returning to the U.S. on April 2, 1994. The group met with top South African leaders discussing upcoming South African elections and post election priorities.

Other critics claim CBC cannot have an effective foreign policy program for Sub-Saharan Africa when there are only two CBC members on the House subcommittee on Africa. Mr. Mfume feels the CBC does not need to have specific numbers on specific committees or subcommittees to be effective. In this regard, the CBC

established a Legislative Alert Force. "This force consists of 13 members with the specific mission to track pending legislative actions in the House and the Senate, and developing long-term legislative strategies for the CBC."⁶⁰ This approach has been very effective thus far and has enabled the CBC to remain abreast of all legislative activities.

Additionally, there is the "belief that the CBC has not done all it could do to promote the interests of African-American constituents."⁶¹ Some critics believe CBC is not responsive to individual citizens, and is perceived to be concerned only with the interests of affluent black Americans. Not all black Americans are satisfied with the work of the CBC and other leading black civil rights organizations. They don't feel these organizations are properly addressing their needs. Because of this dissatisfaction, many black are looking for alternatives. Some therefore, are turning to traditional right wing conservative organizations "such as the Heritage Foundation, the Free Congress Foundation, Family Research Council and the National Center for Public Policy Research."⁶² to meet their needs. However, the NAACP Executive Director Reverend Benjamin Chavis, Jr. believes black conservatives "have very little impact on the black community, and most of them are taken as being political and social deviants-but they are taken seriously by white conservatives. It is very interesting that a group that has no support in the black community can get financing outside the community to play a divisive role within the community."⁶³ Under the auspices of its "New Majority Project",⁶⁴ the Heritage Foundation has also implemented an aggressive program

to recruit black conservatives into its organization. According to one top Heritage official, the program is tremendously successful in attracting black conservatives.

CBC officials believe this particular criticism is not justified because of a lack of knowledge on the part of average citizens concerning the role and functions of the CBC. They claim people use the CBC as a government ombudsman, and inundate them with thousands of requests for assistance each year from black citizens across America. The CBC is not staffed to perform this function and consequently people may believe the CBC is not interested nor care about their problems. The only solution to remedy this problem is through an educational awareness program aimed at informing the public of the role and functions of the CBC. The caucus may want to consider adding additional staff to address the specific concerns of individual constituents.

CONCLUSIONS

The CBC is the most powerful black group in the U.S. today. The CBC is a recognized power broker which yields considerable influence with the Clinton Administration and Congress. The black community also perceives the CBC as being one of the most influential groups in the nation as well. Their acceptance is measured in how well they are treated in the black press. This group has the ability to effectively influence foreign and domestic policies. The caucus strength lies in its ability to form coalitions, make political deals, and otherwise effectively use the political process to achieve organizational objectives. As such, the organization has the moral and political obligation to serve as

the leader for spearheading development of a coherent American foreign policy for Africa. For if the caucus doesn't take positive action in this area, then perhaps no one will. According to several Congressional staffers, there is still quite a bit of anti-African sentiment in the U.S. Therefore, a major challenge for the CBC is to maintain an organized disciplined group that does not splinter into rival factions. The organization must remain focused and committed to effectively changing U. S. policies regarding Africa. In this manner they can be most effective while simultaneously achieving their legislative goals regarding Africa.

Although there are many individuals, groups, and organizations working diligently to improve U.S. foreign policy toward Africa, there clearly is a need for an organized coherent approach. The only other organization trying to do this function is the Constituency for Africa (the Constituency). "The mission of the Constituency for Africa is to mobilize and foster increased cooperation and coordination among a broad based coalition of American, African, and international organizations, institutions, and individuals committed to the progress and empowerment of Africa and African peoples."⁶⁵

According to Melvin P. Foote Executive Director of the Constituency, black Americans must begin to organize themselves into political lobbying groups just like other groups such as the Jewish and Arab lobbies. However, this small five person organization does not possess sufficient resources to serve as the vanguard for organizing political support for African policies. Therefore, the time is right for CBC to take the initiative, seize

the lead and serve as the catalyst for such an effort. By virtue of its position and influence within America's political structure, this organization can successfully provide the leadership necessary to elevate African affairs to a respectable place in American foreign policy. That is to say Africa should receive equal treatment as is afforded other American allies such as Israel and Russia. The caucus can also help itself by adding a foreign affairs specialist to its staff.

One of America's enduring principles and long term national security interests is to promote worldwide democracy. Democracy is quickly spreading as the most viable form of government today because it continues to be the "only system which guarantees individual civil and human rights".⁶⁶ American resources are limited and thus the country must be selective and creative in finding ways to achieve and support democratic reforms. In this regard, the U.S. must select major regional African powers such as Nigeria, Liberia, and South Africa and provide these countries the wherewithal so they can be effective leaders, provide democratic role models, and be the stabilizing forces on the continent. Special emphasis must also be placed on effectively using African organizations like the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). These organizations can assist with conflict resolution, peace enforcement, and peace keeping operations. "They can also be called upon to provide various forms of political, diplomatic, and security assistance"⁶⁷ that will benefit African countries.

"Promoting democracy means offering countries moral,

political, diplomatic, and economic support to include the fostering of market-oriented economies. Countries that are trying to institutionalize democratic government must receive economic assistance to help them weather painful economic reform and the training and technical support to make democracy function effectively. Assistance must also be provided to the nongovernmental pillars of democracy, parties, civic groups, trade unions, think tanks, and the mass media."⁶⁸

Effective use of nongovernmental organizations such as The National Endowment for Democracy (NEO), The African-American Institute, and Freedom House must be integrated in the country's approach promoting democracy. Democracy is still struggling to be widely accepted in Africa since democracy promotion often causes elites to share power and authority. Even with all the problems associated with adopting democracy, many nations are continuing to do so. For example, "in Ghana, Benin, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Ivory Coast and elsewhere, the upsurge of democracy movement has forced autocratic and military regimes to make one concession after another. The global future of democracy is intimately bound up with America's own global vision and daring. Democracy promotion is one of the cheapest, most cost effective ways of advancing the national interest."⁶⁹ The U.S. can certainly exploit this massive movement toward democracy through peaceful engagement on the continent.

My observations concerning Africa's plight were confirmed in a brilliant essay written by Julius O. Ihonvbere and T. E. Turner titled "Africa In The Post-containment Era: Constraints, Pressures and Prospects For The 21st Century." The authors concluded that Africa has been neglected by the world community as evidenced by the quality of media coverage provided African affairs in the

western press. Furthermore, billions of dollars are earmarked for Russia, the former Soviet states, and other Eastern European nations while African nations receive only a pittance. For example, "Egypt, Israel, and Russia represent 58 percent of the foreign assistance budget of \$7.3 billion." Yet Africa receives less than \$1 billion. "We do have a responsibility to Africa, especially since we helped exacerbate so many problems by pouring in the level of arms that we did"⁷⁰ during the Cold War.

This view is further reinforced by Wole Soyinka, a 1986 Nobel prize winner in literature in an article in which he describes the West's fascination with ethnic cleansing in Bosnia while neglecting such brutal atrocities in Africa. He argues this type of action is a symptom of a deeply rooted problem that is neglect of Africa and other third world countries at the expense of western and eastern European nations. The West is quick to proclaim problems in its sphere of influence and provide resources to fix them. But often neglects similar activities in Africa referring to these as strictly African problems. He further believes these attitudes should no longer be tolerated such as evaluating Third World and European nations using different standards. Soyinka suggests one first step in this equalization process is to eliminate permanent members of the security council and make all countries equal partners in the U.N.⁷¹

Joining Soyinka is Francis M. Deng of the Brookings Institution. Deng's basic premise revolves around the idea that Africans ought to reconsider redrawing their borders. He feels justified in his beliefs because Africa has largely been left to

fend for itself. Deng contends many African problems are a direct result of improperly drawn colonial boundaries. Colonial boundaries were drawn for political reasons to suit European colonial masters. Their objectives were to disorganize and split African nations and peoples. Therefore, deliberate attempts were made to destroy African institutions, cultures, and any semblance of belonging to ancestral tribes. "Africans recognize that the world does not care much about them and that they must take their destinies into their own hands."⁷² Part of the process to gain control of their destiny may be to redraw borders, if the end result "establishes peace, justice, stability, and prosperity"⁷³ and moves us toward "a comprehensively peaceful, just and orderly world."⁷⁴ The precedent for redrawing borders has already occurred in Ethiopia. Deng contends however, that borders should not be arbitrarily changed, but be based on logic and reason. To make this a legitimate process, the U.S. and United Nations (UN) must take an active role.

What all this means is if Africa is to survive, it must have considerable help. Africa's problems are so severe, they cannot be solved by African nations nor can the U.S. solely provide the required assistance. "Long term solutions to African problems will have to continue to involve the international organizations like the United Nations, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as well as other nations such as"⁷⁵ those of the European Community, Japan, and China. The U.S. has a golden opportunity to emerge as the leader of coordinating an international effort to provide meaningful assistance to Africa. This leadership role

could pay tremendous dividends to the country in terms of increased political credibility within Africa, increased influence among third world nations, and long term economic benefits for American businesses. Without active participation of CBC and other politically powerful organizations, it is likely no major American foreign policy initiatives will be adopted for Africa by the U.S. government. The CBC must awaken the collective conscience of America, be the leading advocate, and serve as the catalyst to promote change for America to adopt a more progressive policy toward Africa. It is my contention that without U.S. leadership and a strong commitment from the UN, Africa will certainly continue to deteriorate and become a "forth rate" continent.

Finally, CBC members must be more accessible to the average citizen. Furthermore, the CBC staff is not adequately staffed to provide professional staff support services. The small three person staff is overworked, overwhelmed, and as a result does not provide quality service nor is it responsive to the needs of its constituents. Their inability to properly function as a staff agency detracts from the overall professionalism and reputation of the CBC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

My recommendations focus on two areas for further research. The first area deals with conducting a comprehensive analysis of all legislation dealing with the CBC. That is to determine how many bills were sponsored or co-sponsored by CBC members and of these, how many were enacted into law. This would also include an examination of foreign policy legislation. A comparison between FY

93 and FY 94 would be a good starting point. An analysis of this nature could further strengthen the findings contained in this report.

The second recommendation is to design and conduct a survey of all members of the CBC, other key House democratic leaders, and influential members of the black community. The purpose of the survey is to provide for a more quantitative and scientific approach to data collection, and thus a more comprehensive study.

THE FUTURE⁷⁶

The future looks bright for the CBC to assume a greater leadership role and become more of an advocate for Africa. However, the outlook for Africa is very dismal. Since the U.S. has done very little in Africa, any new initiatives such as increasing foreign aid will result in instant payoffs for the country. We must be cautious however, in that we do not over commit ourselves. Our ultimate objective should be to get Africans to be responsible for Africa. America's role should be that of an advisor providing limited resources to insure adequate economic, social and political development.

One major challenge facing the CBC today is the impact that recent federal court and Supreme Court decisions have had on redistricting. The courts in cases involving North Carolina and Louisiana ruled that "racial gerrymandering" is essentially unconstitutional, particularly when bizarre districts are drawn. However, the courts failed to provide guidelines on how states might select minority districts. The Louisiana case offers the Supreme Court the opportunity to correct this problem. "The

Supreme Court, which all but asked for the job in its 1993 opinion in Shaw v. Reno, must now decide how far it wants to go in monitoring state efforts to create House districts in which minority voters predominate."⁷⁷ Twenty six Congressional districts were created to give minorities electoral majorities because of changes to the 1986 Voting Rights Act. The CBC's position is that the current method of selecting minority districts is okay and should be continued. No one can predict the eventual outcome of the impact the Supreme Court may have on redistricting, but most agree some form of minority majority districts will survive. Hopefully, the Supreme Court decision will not result in the loss of black Congressional districts. Such a loss could have a tremendous negative impact on the caucus's ability to remain a viable player in the foreign policy arena for Africa.

The CBC has achieved the status of a major political force in American politics. Now the caucus must capitalize on its remarkable achievements and continue to make significant contributions to improving overall living conditions for Sub-Saharan Africa.

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